tofore, from the various public exhibitions of the year.

2ndly. The abandonment altogether of an annual distribution of engravings from modern pictures, and in lieu thereof the occasional distribution of engravings of a superior character as prizes amongst the subscribers:

And 3rdly. The retention of 10 per cent. out of the receipts, "for the purchase of works not for distribution, but for public exhibition."

In a long correspondence which followed, and has been published, your council first strenuously denied the right of the Board of Trade to alter the constitution of the society; and secondly, pointed out the impracticability of the changes proposed, and the injurious results which would be caused if they could be carried out.

A deputation from the council afterwards attended the Right Honourable H. Labouchere, president of the Board of Trade, to explain further their views, when the board withdrew, *pro tempore*, the requirements in respect of the engravings and the retention of 10 per cent. of the subscribers' money; but called for the selection of, at all events, the higher prizes by the council, and requested that the council would consider whether they could themselves suggest some arrangement to that effect. At the next meeting of the council, a letter was ordered to be sent to the board, containing the following resolution, passed unanimously:—

"That the council having considered the communication which took place at the recent interview with the president of the Board of Trade, respectfully beg leave to state it as their opinion, that so material a change in the constitution of the society, as to take away the selection of the pictures from any of the prizeholders, would be most injurious to the Art-Union: and they trust that the Board of Trade will leave unaltered a principle which has been the basis of the success of this society."

The reply to this from the Board of Trade contained intimation that their lordships had "made the following bye-laws in addition to those which had been transmitted to them by the council of the Art-Union of London:—

"1. In the annual distribution of prizes for years 1849, 1850, and 1851 respectively, a certain proportion of the prizes distributed shall consist of pictures, drawings, sculpture, or other works of art, previously selected by a committee, appointed in such manner as a general meeting of the members of the society shall decide, or, in default of such appointment, by the council for the time being or a committee thereof; and in the distribution for the year 1852, and in all subsequent distributions, the whole of the prizes distributed shall consist of works previously selected in manner aforesaid.

2. The proportion of prizes to be previously selected in the years 1849, 1850, and 1851, and the mode of distributing the prizes so selected in those or any subsequent years, shall be decided by a general meeting of the members of the society, to be holden at least three months before the annual distribution of the year 1849, subject to the approval of the Board of Trade, or of any other Committee of the Privy Council to which the consideration of Art-Unions may at the time be referred."

On the 11th of the present month, when the effect of this interference on the funds of the society was discovered, the honorary secretary addressed the following letter to the President of the Board:—

"Sir,—At a meeting of the Council of the Art-Union of London held this day, the Marquis of Northampton, Vice-President, in the chair, I was requested to state to you that the amount of subscriptions for the present year will fall short of that of either of the last two or three years by *several thousands of pounds*. This enormous diminution of their resources, which will be most disastrous to artists, they mainly ascribe, unhesitatingly, to the recent interference on the part of the Lords of the Committee of Privy Council for Trade, which led to misapprehension, and to a feeling of doubt and insecurity in the minds of former subscribers, and so has prevented them from continuing their support to the association. The Council, in the exercise of their duty, have contracted very extensive liabilities. This necessarily increases the anxiety with which they contemplate a further diminution of the amount of subscriptions next year as almost certain to result from the proceedings of the committee; and therefore, waving for the time the question of their lordships' right to alter the constitution of the society (which they consider it their duty still strenuously to deny), they respectfully solicit the committee to suspend the requirement of any change in the mode of selecting the prizes for one year. They venture to ask the favour of an early reply, as they consider it of the utmost importance that the determination of the committee should be announced at the next annual meeting of the subscribers, which is fixed to take place on the 25th inst."

On the 14th the following reply was received:—

"Office of Committee of Privy Council for Trade,
Whitehall, 14th April, 1848.

Sir,—I am directed by the Lords of the Committee of the Privy Council for Trade to acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated 11th of April, 1848.

My lords regret to hear that the amount of the subscriptions to the Art-Union of London has decreased considerably in the present year; but they apprehend that this diminution is to be attributed mainly to the circumstance of the depression of trade, which has so unfortunately prevailed of late, rather than to any other cause.

I am further directed to state, that my lords cannot abandon their intention of desiring to see the principle, which they believe to be a sound one, introduced into the selection of prizes, after the expiration of the present year, into the Art-Union of London, as well as into other similar institutions in various parts of the country. But that, provided the principle is recognised and a beginning made towards carrying it into effect, my lords will most readily consider any suggestions of the council with regard to any further modifications, in addition to those which they have already avowed their willingness to adopt, to which it may be thought advisable that it should be subjected in this instance.

I am directed, in conclusion, to assure the council that while my lords feel that they cannot abandon the functions with which the Legislature has thought fit to invest them for the regulation of Art-Unions, yet that they continue to be most anxious to act in a spirit of co-operation and harmony with the council of the Art-Union of London as far as they can do so consistently with their public duty.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

JOHN LEFEVRE.

To George Godwin, Esq., &c."

Here the matter rests at present. Your council feel bound to continue to refuse assent to the assumed right of the Board to alter the constitution of the Society. The Act of Parliament 9th and 10th of Victoria expressly refers to Art-Unions conducted on two recognised different principles, and makes both legal. According to the Act, a duly incorporated art-union, which distributes by lot to the members certain sums of money, is legal, as well as one which distributes the works of art themselves, provided *only* that the money be expended in the purchase of works of art, and the society be carried on in good faith for the encouragement of the fine arts. Whereas, the effect of what are called the *bye-laws* ordered by the Board is, in contravention of this, to declare that only *one* description of Art-Union shall be legal, a power which the council are forced to deny. They are the further impelled to this by the intimation of *constant* interference on the part of their lordships, conveyed in their last communication,—an interference which could not fail to have the effect of annoying and discouraging those by whom the society is conducted, and would tend unquestionably to its ultimate extinction—a result which cannot be contemplated by them without anxiety and pain, and should not be heedlessly risked by a government professing a desire to extend a knowledge and love of art amongst the people, and advance the fine arts of the country.

It is evident that the Board of Trade has erroneously regarded the important distinction of the selection of prizes in these societies by those who gain them, and by others for them, as a mere matter of detail, while it is, in fact, a fundamental principle of their constitution. To give each prizeholder the right of choice uncontrolled, save by his own taste and judgment, and such advice as he may voluntarily seek, is one of the chief means upon which the council rely for the formation of an art-appreciating public. "In the first address issued by the society, February, 1837 (as they have pointed out to their lordships), it is remarked that, 'The mode of encouraging art by purchasing works to be distributed among the subscribers, is neither novel in principle nor untried in practice.' 'But the promoters of the Art-Union propose to combine with this principle that of leaving the selection of works to the subscribers themselves,' and this was prominently set forth in the first and all subsequent lists of regulations; it was, in fact, the characteristic and foundation law of the association. The right of *selecting for himself a work of art from one of the public exhibitions of the day*, was the chief prize offered, from the commencement, to the subscribers." To protect a society offering this right as an inducement for subscription, the Act of Parliament was passed; and to incorporate a society offering this special right, a Charter was granted by her Majesty. Bye-laws, over which, by the terms of the Charter, the Committee of Privy Council have control, simply go to the mode of *distributing* this right and other details; the offer of the right itself is made legal by the Act of the Legislature.

The comparative merits of the two systems have been so often dwelt on by the council in their reports, and the superior advantages of that advisedly adopted as the basis of the Art-Union of London have been made so manifest by time, that further remark would seem to be unnecessary. It is proved to be the means of inducing the largest numbers of persons to join the association, and thus become interested in the arts,—that it tends to the largest expenditure on works of art—brings artists and their best patrons, the public, more immediately together—is best calculated to lead to the education of the people in art—to prevent the influence of personal feeling or bias in favour of particular styles of art, to the injury of others,—and is, in most respects, the best calculated to advance the great objects of the association. The council have had occasion, for special purposes, to adopt the principle to which it is now desired to confine them. What they claim, however, is the right to avail themselves of both, in accordance with the Act of Parliament and the charter of the society.

The vital question at present, then, between the Board of Trade and the Art-Union of London is,—whether the council shall select the prizes for the prizeholders, or the prizeholders select them for themselves: and to make the opinion of the society on this point clear to those who have not that opportunity of otherwise learning it which your council have, a resolution will presently be submitted for your consideration.

The number of provincial honorary secretaries is now 426, who continue to manifest warm interest in the progress of the association, and are entitled to the thanks of the members. The council notice the increase of subscribers in America, especially in Boston, from Mr. Dennett, with great satisfaction. From New York (Mr. Ridner), Hobart Town (Mr. Kay), and from Sydney (Rev. Mr. Walsh and Mr. Ford), very satisfactory lists have also been received.

Two hundred and seventy-three works of art were selected by the prizeholders of last year, and, with the exception of two from Westminster Hall, which could not be removed, were exhibited in the Suffolk-street Gallery, by the kind permission of the Society of British Artists. The collection was open for a month—a part of the time during the evening—and was visited by an immense number of persons.

The exhibition included the finished picture by Mr. H. C. Selous, from his prize cartoon, "Queen Philippa interceding for the lives of the burgesses of Calais." In pursuance of the original intention to engrave the selected work, this picture has been put into the hands of Mr. Henry Robinson, to be executed in the mixed style. It is proposed to distribute impressions from this plate as prizes in future years.

Since the date of the last report the prints and outlines due to the subscribers of 1845, and to the subscribers of 1847, have been delivered; so that, at this time, there are no prints in arrear beyond those of the current year.

The council will not shut their eyes to the fact, that the prints last sent out have not been wholly satisfactory. It must be remembered that they are, in this respect, in the hands of the engravers. It is due to themselves to state, as regards the engravings for 1847, that the propriety of refusing to distribute the impressions from the plates when finished, was seriously discussed by the council; but it was thought that such a course would be scarcely consistent with their duty as trustees.

In respect of the engraving for 1845, the council considered that when they had obtained one of the best pictures of one of our most esteemed artists, and had placed it in

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